

Racial justice learning for Quakers...

The Black Lives Matter Quaker Alliance Cornwall (BLMQAC) was conceived this year after a Friend from Cornwall attended a series of five online workshops. Turning the Tide GB's Lyndsay Burtonshaw and the team initiated and facilitated the workshops in response to the killing of George Floyd and the growth of Black Lives Matter protests in the UK. Few of the 80 Quakers attending viewed themselves as racist but all were seeking an increased understanding of the challenges faced by people of colour. Throughout the workshops they began to develop a greater insight into effective ally-ship.

An awareness of the Quaker testimony to Equality must have sat with these Friends over the weeks as they explored power, privilege and prejudice and learnt that *"there is no neutral space with racism, we cannot be 'not racist', we can only be complicit in racism or actively against racism."*

Many on the course experienced deep discomfort by the degree of suffering and death uncovered by the researching of racial inequality. They learnt quite simply that true learning about racial injustice came from listening and the awareness that this wasn't just an 'American' thing. News accounts of the sheer weight of injustice and inequality in the UK are freely available.

Friends have varying skills which they can bring to help develop racial justice in our society and the restrictions that Covid-19 has placed on all of us have given the BLMQAC time to learn and consider ways forward in which we can show our solidarity by continued learning about the impact of racism, by financial support, by lobbying and by prayerful action. Racial injustice is a deep and ongoing conversation which has taken small but significant steps here in Cornwall. Racism is being actively challenged in our schools with restorative approaches. We have a Quaker presence with Cornwall Council and Churches Together in Cornwall have asked us to share a Quaker perspective on racial justice. Individual Friends are working in a myriad of ways to counter racial inequality and injustice and to ally with groups actively promoting black equality and justice.

Devon and Cornwall official police figures have recently revealed that black people in the south west are:

- 3 times more likely to be victims of crime than white people
- 12 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people
- 9.5 times more likely to have force used against them
- 6 times more likely to be considered the suspect of criminal activity
- half as likely to receive a community resolution

The words of Martin Luther King remind us of our testimonies to peace, justice and equality... *'An injustice anywhere is a threat to injustice everywhere...'*

L Chandler (for BLMQAC)

